



November 1, 2021

Commissioner Richard Corcoran  
Florida Department of Education, Office of the Commissioner  
Turlington Building, Suite 1514  
325 West Gaines Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Commissioner Corcoran:

We hereby submit the initial results of the 2020-2021 financial accountability report review for private schools that participate in the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship for low-income students, the Gardiner Scholarship, the Family Empowerment Scholarship and the Hope Scholarship through Step Up For Students.

This financial accountability requirement is described in Florida Statute 1002.421(1)(q) and requires each school receiving more than \$250,000 of scholarship funds in a single year to engage an independent Certified Public Accountant (CPA) to complete a report that focuses on the use of the scholarship funds and the systems, financial procedures and controls in place at the school. The CPA must complete Agreed-Upon Procedures that are filed with the commissioner and submit an accountability report to the Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO) that provides the majority of the school's scholarship funds. The deadline for that submission is September 15<sup>th</sup> following the end of that Fiscal Year. In turn, the SFO must notify the commissioner by October 30<sup>th</sup> of that year of a school's failure to submit a report and of any material exceptions reported by a CPA.

For the 2020-2021 school year, Step Up For Students identified 1,310 schools that received more than \$250,000 of scholarship funds. A total of 1,289 private schools throughout the state served 122,215 scholarship students and received funding from Step Up For Students programs. This represents 104 additional schools, or a ten percent increase when compared to the prior year. We have communicated with these schools through emails, phone calls, and hosted webinars to notify them of their obligations under the law.

As of this date, we have yet to receive reports from 83 schools. Of the 83 not received, 62 are verified with the CPAs as "in progress". The schools and CPAs continue to work to complete their reports and satisfy the financial accountability reporting requirement.

**[www.StepUpForStudents.org](http://www.StepUpForStudents.org)**  
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Of the 1,214 reports that we received, 282 or 23 percent, contained material exceptions that ranged from inadequate segregation of duties to not utilizing an operating budget. Of those schools with material exceptions reported, 221 or 78 percent of those schools have submitted corrective action plans as of October 29, 2021.

There were 32 schools that submitted incomplete reports. Per the existing departmental policy, they have been granted until December 15<sup>th</sup> to complete the incomplete sections of their reports. We will notify you by December 18<sup>th</sup> whether any of these schools have reports that contain material exceptions. We are also attaching the following Appendices for your reference:

Appendix I

- The schools with clean reports,
- The schools with incomplete reports,
- The schools with material exceptions with corrective action plans
- The schools with material exceptions without corrective action plans
- The schools that did not file a report with a breakdown of schools confirmed contract and in progress with a CPA.

We thank you for your support of our programs and promoting education choice.

Sincerely,



Scott Smith, Director of Program Accounting  
Step Up For Students

Enclosure (1)